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MONTHLY REVIEW

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VOL. 40

8

INSIDE SOUTH AFRICA
John Saul

TWO SPIRITUAL REVOLUTIONARIES
Joel Kovel

INTERVIEW WITH EDWARD S. HERMAN
Robert W. McChesney

REMAPPING THE U.S. LEFT
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DOROTHY PARKER DESERVES BETTER
Annette Rubinstein

ITORS . . . PAUL M. SWEEZY . . . HARRY MAGDOFF

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NOTES FROM THE EDITORS

With this issue of MR we inaugurate the commemoration of the magazine's fortieth anniversary (Volume 1, Number 1 was published in May 1949). In an introductory editorial to that first issue, titled "Where We Stand," we explained why we were founding this new periodical. Pointing out, and summarizing evidence to demonstrate, that in "the early years of the twentieth century the subject of socialism was widely and eagerly discussed in the United States," we contrasted this with the situation that existed in the late 1940s when this earlier interest had declined to the point "that today it would probably not be an exaggeration to say that for the great majority of Americans socialism is little more than a dirty word." This, we thought, was an extraordinary situation because it came at a time when much of the rest of the world was moving toward socialism (remember that 1949 was also the year of the triumph of the Chinese Revolution), and a deeply disturbing situation because "there are still many Americans who believe, with us, that in the long run, socialism will prove to be the only solution to the increasingly serious economic and social problems that face the United States."

We went on to say that what we mean by socialism is "a system of society with two fundamental characteristics: first, public ownership of the decisive sectors of the economy; and second, comprehensive planning of production for the benefit of the producers themselves." The possibility and workability

(Continued on inside back cover)

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WITHOUT PROPER PAPERS: INSIDE SOUTH AFRICA

by JOHN SAUL

I had not been to South Africa for almost a decade, unable to obtain a visa from the apartheid government. In July of last year I decided I should go anyway. It wasn't the first time I've crossed a frontier without proper papers. But in 1972 when I visited the liberated areas of Mozambique during the war against the Portuguese, I was accompanied by a column of FRELIMO guerillas. This time I was on my own.

There were a few moments of tension—decades of reading thrillers should have left me better prepared—yet the details of entry and exit don't really matter. Pretty small potatoes, in any case, compared to the dangers South African activists must confront daily as they seek new ways to beat back the brutal repression of South Africa's current officially declared "Emergency." More important was the opportunity to witness at close hand the impact of that repression, to explore the changing social context which situates it, to get some hint of how the broad movement for a democratic South Africa is attempting to regroup on difficult terrain. After all, not even the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation or the *Globe and Mail* are presently allowed into South Africa, having been specific targets of a more generalized news shutdown that has helped Pretoria take apartheid out of the headlines in recent months. In this context

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John Saul is a long-time contributor to MR and a member of the editorial collective of *Southern Africa Report*. A version of this article appeared in the November-December 1988 issue of *This Magazine*.

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a certain measure of risk seemed a small price to pay for the sharp impressions to be gleaned from a month inside South Africa.

A decade since my last visit. Almost a decade, too, since I wrote of that earlier trip in the pages of *This Magazine* ("In the Belly of the Beast," November/December, 1979). Unfortunately much of what I wrote then might merely be repeated here. "Things in South Africa," I affirmed, "*are* as bad as all that. And far from improving they're getting worse. . . . In the townships the scope of arbitrary administrative power over the lives of urban Africans can be seen to grow broader every day, while the government is quite explicit about the fact that any apparent reforms are an alternative to, not a step towards, majority rule." Equally true in 1988. My last visit occurred in the wake of the dramatic Soweto uprising of 1976. The intervening decade has seen a continuing escalation of resistance, finding a new high-water mark in the near-insurrection of 1984–85, an upsurge far more dramatic than the Soweto events. But again, my observation in that earlier article regarding Soweto has present-day resonance: "such protest ultimately did lack the focus and the clout to really endanger the state in a fundamental way."

Indeed, it was hard to escape the sense, during this visit, that the past few years have witnessed a setback in South Africa. The nationwide emergency regulations imposed since 1986 have introduced a level of repression and state terror even more severe than that which followed in the immediate aftermath of the Soweto events. So severe, in fact, that their impact invites comparisons with a previous period of emergency, that of the early 1960s, when, in the wake of the Sharpeville massacre, the state was able to smash the democratic movement, physically and psychologically, for a decade. As a result, the movement for genuine change in South Africa has been forced to retreat some considerable distance from the euphoric mood of the mid-1980s, when people even talked about the likely nature of a *post-apartheid* South Africa.

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Yet if the democratic movement is bloodied, it is also unbowed. In 1978, I could affirm that "post-Soweto South Africa is not post-Sharpeville South Africa," and the escalating political activity of subsequent years bore out my assessment. In 1988, as I moved around South Africa—to Johannesburg, to Durban, to Capetown and to a number of places in between—and as I talked with a wide range of South African trade union and community activists, I found today's South Africa to be even less a "post-Sharpeville South Africa." Whatever the recent setbacks, the events of the past ten years have had the overall effect of strengthening the movement, psychologically and organizationally, for the long haul—an important point, which I'll come back to.

First impressions? In downtown Johannesburg, I did see more blacks—in some restaurants and theaters and on the streets at all hours—than I had ten years ago. Blacks are settling in the urban areas at a pace that the government's ongoing "removal" policies can never hope to arrest. One geographer told me that Durban is now the fastest growing city in the world, and it was not hard to believe him after a day spent touring the sprawling shantytowns of that city. And so-called "grey areas" of mixed-residence have sprung up in Jo'burg, for example, in defiance of the notorious Group Areas Act (though the government now threatens to act more sharply to contain such trends).

Yet the pervasive racism of the society remains very close to the surface, visible in even the most trivial of contexts. An article in Johannesburg's leading newspaper on the "world's fastest sprinter"—a local policeman *not* named Ben Johnson or Carl Lewis—requires a second reading before one realizes that it is talking about the world's fastest *white* sprinter. A golden-haired girl smiling out from another front-page article is described as being "all dolled up for the matric dance—a big event in every girl's life"!

Unfortunately other aspects of the "commonsense" of South Africa's untransformed racist system are less laughable, much more grim. I had many intense and thoughtful discussions with activist friends about how to reorganize the demo-

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cratic movement in the black townships. So often, however, we had to bring ourselves up short, to remind ourselves of just how many of those who might be expected to implement such tactics in this or that township have been killed, arrested, or driven very deep underground in the past several years. I knew the litany from abroad, of course: the mass detentions and torture, often of the very young, the Goniwe killing in Cradock, the assassination of Victoria Mxenge, the Mayekiso trial, and the harassment of the Sharpeville Six. But those I talked with had similar stories to tell and often quite personal burdens to bear. After all, the active pursuit of full color-blind democratic rights is still among the most serious of crimes in South Africa, and it is precisely this "crime" that the emergency regulations, with their more full-blown militarization of South African society, have been designed to curb.

Significantly, the state's tactics extend beyond militarization and police violence to the setting of elements of the black community against each other—and, with some success, to destabilizing neighboring states such as Mozambique and Angola. In Durban and Capetown, I observed at close hand the real nature of the "black on black violence" that fuels Pretoria's propaganda machine. Invariably, it is a matter of the state making common cause with privileged black strata in the repression of the democratic movement: I heard the grim tales of active police connivance with the "warlords" of Capetown slum boss Johnson Ngxobongwana in the smashing of the Old Crossroads squatter settlement several years ago, for example, and of their tacit alliance with the brutal Chief Buthelezi and his Inkatha movement as the latter has taken the offensive in recent months in Pietermaritzburg. Of course, one did not need to go to South Africa to know that Buthelezi is *not* the leader of some uniform entity of "six million Zulu" as ABC *Nightline* host Ted Koppel and Toronto's *Globe and Mail* often seek to present him; no more should his murderous tactics in defense of his own turf have earned him the label of moderate with which such sources also tend to grace him. Nonetheless, it was chilling to hear from Zulu trade union and United Democratic Front (UDF) activists that they would just as soon fall into the

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clutches of the South African police as those of Buthelezi and his henchmen.

There are also political divisions that cut across the racial divide on the white side of the political equation, although it is not entirely clear how significant they may prove to be. While I was there, the six-year prison sentence given to a young draftee named David Bruce for refusing to undertake his military service became big news with substantial impact. Bypassing any religious or pacifist arguments in his own defense, Bruce stated quite simply that he would do nothing to defend apartheid. Within days, another 143 draft-eligible youths from across the country had associated themselves with Bruce's stance. Indeed, the growing support for the End Conscription Campaign (ECC) moved the military, momentarily, to discuss with it some form of compromise through an expanded definition of acceptable alternative service. Typically, however, compromise was not to be the state's preferred option. Only days after my return to Canada, I learned that the ECC had been banned.

Yet whatever optimism such a division within the white community might nurture seems far outweighed by the spectacle of government and business closing ranks. In the mid-1980s, confronted by a rising popular movement, some businesspeople did become more reform-minded, counselling some significant deracialization in order to preempt the possibility of the resistance movement becoming ever more revolutionary and—horror of horrors—socialist. Now, as I breakfasted with one young, activist Afrikaner business reformer, I found him expressing deep frustration at how quickly his colleagues had fallen in behind the state's repressive strategy once that strategy had been seen to "work," at least in the short run, in forestalling resistance.

He also confirmed my sense that it is not so much the pull of political parties to the right—the very visible Conservative Party (CP), the neo-fascist Afrikaner Weerstand Beweging (AWB)—that constrains the National Party's reformist inclinations. Rather, the root of the problem is that party's own intransigent stand against any real and substantive transfor-

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mation—read "democratization"—of the South African situation. To be sure, driving around South Africa I could see quite clearly the social roots of an ultra-Right, see them in the relative poverty of marginal white working-class neighborhoods in a city like Johannesburg or in the dusty towns of the platteland, a long way from the affluence of such leafy suburbs as Houghton and Sandton. Here were whites who had nothing but privileged pigmentation going for them in their attempt to safeguard their socioeconomic positions against the advance of the black population across the color bar; they view each and every whiff of change with deep suspicion. Yet my business acquaintance was prepared to lump the CP and the AWB with the National Party (and indeed with many white liberal groupings to the left of the Nats) as *all* being parties of mere reform! "Reform," in his lexicon, as distinct from "transform," signifies marginal adjustments in the status quo designed to make the essentials of that status quo easier to defend. The result: too few of even his own business colleagues are prepared to embrace the strategy—potentially opportune if admittedly risky—of democratizing South Africa's capitalist system.

There is a good deal of bluff to the apartheid government's intransigence, of course. Its hard line is not quite as successful as it likes to pretend. Repression cannot will away resistance from below. Nor can it solve deep-seated economic problems. It was common knowledge inside South Africa while I was there that underlying the government's recently more flexible approach towards the situation in Angola and Namibia was the hard reality of military setback in Angola and an inability to meet the escalating costs of such a wasting war. There is also evidence of vulnerability in the paranoia in ruling circles regarding sanctions. Indeed, anyone who still doubts the potential impact of anti-apartheid action from abroad should read the South African press for a couple of weeks and note the near panic that any sign of serious sanctions arouses.

Just before I left Canada, for example, a small group of us at York University had questioned South African participation in the international tennis tournament soon to be held on the campus. Within days—thanks to hard work by anti-apartheid

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activists and the fact that the Commonwealth foreign ministers were about to meet in Toronto—the Canadian government had been forced to exclude the South Africans. A significant victory certainly, but it seemed equally significant to find news of this victory blazened across the front pages of South African newspapers during the course of my visit there. Even more frenzied was the response in the white establishment press and in political circles to U.S. presidential candidate Mike Dukakis' strongly stated commitment to the cause of sanctions. In fact, sitting in South Africa, one might have been forgiven for thinking sanctions to be the only issue in the U.S. campaign.

Yet bluffs, like repression itself, can work, buy time, reassure potential sources of support. Western governments and business interests have little enough genuine enthusiasm for sanctions in any case. If South Africa can be made to seem less urgently in need of some preemptive compromise with revolutionary energies even that minimal degree of commitment may begin to wane. There are signs, for example, that the international banks, deeply concerned, not so long ago, about South Africa's "stability," are beginning to creep back, bringing the financial succor the apartheid state craves. The international anti-apartheid network must do what it can to resist any such trend. Yet it is the perceived strength of the democratic movement inside South Africa itself that will do most to dissuade such international economic actors from reengaging. What then, in the South Africa caught in perpetual emergency, are that movement's prospects?

I spoke with trade union officials, from national office holders and local organizers to shop stewards gathered for a meeting in a modest West Rand office; with UDF spokespersons, some of them staying just one jump ahead of the law; with students linked to the broad ranks of township youth; with activists, black and white, in a range of support and advice organizations; with academics, the best of them trying to make their expertise relevant to the revitalization of the popular movement. All admitted that their spirits have wavered under the relentless onslaught of the apartheid state. At the same time, virtually everyone I met refused to concede that the state

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had won anything more than a round in the struggle. The continued existence of this mood of intense commitment to struggle, a sentiment reiterated over and over again in my presence, was the most dramatic news I have to report from a month on the road.

There is, of course, the vibrant memory of the drama that occurred not so many months ago and of the powerful political energies unleashed in that "insurrectionary moment." There is a conviction, too, that such energy is still at large in South Africa, a conviction grounded not in mere hope but in tangible realities. The country remains pockmarked by ongoing rent and school boycotts, for example. But particularly salient and still a topic of urgent conversation during my visit was the successful "stay-away" of June of this year. In defiance of the emergency and of the February bannings of most above-ground democratic political organizations, the three-day stay-away saw as many as 2.5 to 3 million people off work at its peak. The flag of resistance had been shown, visibly reinvigorating people's spirits. But the achievement, jointly engineered by the trade unions and the popular political structures, had also visibly shocked the powers that be, forcing both government and business to reconsider, at least momentarily, some of the more draconian aspects of their newly proposed labor legislation.

To be sure, a few people I talked with seemed to think that raw energy might still prove to be sufficient, that it was merely a matter of time before another spark would once again ignite the South African powder keg, this time exploding the whole sordid system. Certainly, the government is aware of the dangers of such sparks, fearful, for example, of the moment when Nelson Mandela might "die on them" in prison. (It is, of course, equally fearful of the possible implications of setting him free and hence remains frozen in indecision.) More often, however, I discovered a mood of self-criticism to be at large within the movement, a feeling that last time the headlong escalation of the insurrection both underestimated the state's strength and too quickly outstripped the ability to give spreading resistance clear focus and maximum effect. Not that this fact had been entirely overlooked at the time; the months before the emergen-

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cy had seen a growing awareness of the need to consolidate a stronger *organizational* base (street committees and people's courts, for example) in the townships. But the emergency has reinforced the point, even if, unfortunately, that very emergency means there is now much less room than previously for moving openly to consolidate such structures.

As a result, the question of how to strengthen the resistance movement was much on the minds of those with whom I spoke. Trade unions have a certain advantage in these terms, which is one reason why they have emerged as ever more politically central in the current phase (if also as increasingly important targets of state repression). They have the immediate need to mobilize and focus their members' energies for day-to-day struggles with capital over wages and working conditions. Yet in doing so they also create an organizational beachhead for more sweeping and potentially revolutionary confrontations with the state in future moments of crisis. Given the overall repressive atmosphere, township political organizations are more hard pressed to find equivalent modes of effective short-term action, ones that permit interim victories and build confidence among the people of their potential for wresting even more sweeping forms of democratic empowerment from the powers that be.

It was for this reason, apparently, that some UDF activists even briefly floated, for discussion, the idea of participating in local blacks-only elections and thereby seizing hold of state-structured township councils as one possible way of giving fresh focus to popular resistance to the state. Ultimately the idea was rejected, since the councils are, in fact, so tightly controlled by the apartheid administrative apparatus that they grant the democratic forces little real space for maneuver. In fact, only the most obvious of collaborators concluded otherwise, while Bishop Tutu and others, at some risk to themselves, called for a renewed boycott of such structures in the October elections. For its part, the state used its emergency powers (and considerable manipulation of the electoral procedures) to neutralize the boycott and to attempt—with no great success, as things

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turned out—to manufacture the appearance of support for those few blacks prepared to help it make its system work. Continuing boycott of the councils makes sense, I think, but some further discussion of the merits of the boycott made sense too. In any case, this was merely one example among the many I found of the readiness of South African democrats to scrutinize past practice in their effort to devise new and more relevant tactics.

There seemed, in fact, to be even greater tolerance within the resistance movement, more possibilities of comparing notes and learning from shared experience. Even if most (though not all) democratic activists accept the centrality to the movement of the UDF, with its close ties to the Freedom Charter tradition and the African National Congress (ANC), there are those who have found that organization to be sometimes rather overbearing in its political approach. Interventions by Charterist spokespersons in the 1987 annual meeting of the country's leading trade union, COSATU, were criticized along those lines, for example. Yet last year's meeting in May provided a much more open forum for differences of opinion on key questions than had been the case only a year previously. And the meeting also pointed the way forward to a COSATU-sponsored September conference of a broad spectrum of unions and political organizations that would carry the discussion of relevant strategies and tactics further.

A broad spectrum? There are, of course, continuing divisions and differences of opinion even among those who seek to change South Africa. However much the country's evolution has been frozen by racism, it has become a complex and highly differentiated society. Union representatives spoke with me not only of class divisions within the black population, between workers and the small but growing middle class, but also of potential tensions and differentiation of interest between organized workers (with the relative privilege that the mere possession of a job affords them) and the vast army of the unemployed. There are also differences of emphasis between those with nationalist and those with socialist preoccupations (what does "transformation" really mean?), between those

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with an exclusivist "black consciousness" agenda and those with a multi-racial one, between those who stress, under present conditions, the priority of underground activity and those who still find major scope for above-ground initiatives* But within the cacaphony, it was the resilience, the sober second thoughts, the openness to questioning that most caught my ear and exemplified the promise of the present moment.

Unfortunately, come September, the COSATU-sponsored "all-in" conference was banned amid yet another round of detentions and restrictions against anti-apartheid activists and senior trade union officials. How difficult it is, under such circumstances, to find the necessary space to question and regroup. How difficult, too, to speak of wholly peaceful solutions instead of "armed struggle" against so malign and unyielding a state. Indeed, few I talked with seemed to doubt that armed struggle is one essential ingredient of the confrontation with apartheid, or that it is the ANC who will mobilize it. But practical questions remain, a point driven home to me by one particularly discomfiting coincidence: as I sat eating my lunch in a fast-food restaurant in one suburb of Johannesburg, a bomb went off, killing and maiming several people, in a similar establishment in another suburb of Johannesburg not many kilometers away, killing and maiming several people. Interviews with certain ANC personnel cited in South African papers at the time raised the specter of anti-civilian terrorism emerging as a new tactic to "bring the war home" to the white population (although black civilians have also been the victims of the few instances of this kind of action). But who were the perpetrators of such incidents? And what impact do they have on the consciousness of both the black and white populations? These questions attracted intense debate; I was to obtain some answers on my way back to Canada.

Safely out of South Africa, I headed to Zambia to speak with external representatives of one of the key actors back

*For a more detailed discussion of how such questions are being resolved within the movement inside South Africa, see my chapter entitled, "The Popular Movement," in John S. Saul, ed., *The People Shall Govern: From Soweto to Liberation in South Africa*, forthcoming from Monthly Review Press.

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inside, the African National Congress. For the ANC's part, armed action, while felt to be no more than complementary to broader kinds of political work, is nonetheless considered essential both to neutralizing the state's repressive apparatus and to heightening the saliency of resistance both at home and abroad. But "hard targets," not mere random terrorism designed to match the apartheid regime's own terror tactics, remain front and center. True, they admitted, ANC military cadres had been frustrated at the movement's failure to deliver a knockout blow militarily during the insurrection, and there is sharp debate about how best to make the apartheid state pay for its brutal actions. Moreover, some "soft target" incidents—when not the work of right-wing provocateurs—may well represent mistakes made by guerrillas on the ground. And government intransigence may yet lead to an even more anarchic pattern of violence in South Africa. Still, the ANC seems fully committed to avoiding this kind of denouement, with the differences of emphasis among ANC activists that I was able to detect being less about the tactics of retaliatory violence than about other crucial questions.

Not surprisingly, these latter paralleled debates that I had found to be taking place inside the country. What priority is to be assigned to internal mobilization for struggle on the one hand as against the mobilization of external pressure on the other? Should we place more emphasis, in the short run, on the laying down of a much firmer organizational base or on reaccelerating the pace of insurrectionary confrontation? Should we be searching, first and foremost, for allies across a broad spectrum of classes or placing more militant working-class demands at the center of our concerns? Obviously, none of these are really either/or questions (although choices of emphasis on these matters *do* make a difference), and the policy debate that swirled around them within the ANC seemed to be unfolding in a reflective manner appropriate to the difficulties of the moment. Too bad, I thought (and not for the first time), that the South African government seeks only to sow chaos in defense of its blighted system rather than allow the creative capacities so evident in the ranks of the democratic movement

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full play in the building of a new South Africa. Perhaps this will be the ultimate indictment by historians of that government and its allies: the creative energies diverted, the years wasted, the blood spilt, because of its arrogant delaying of the "inevitable." Still, for the moment and in the period of struggle necessary to create the very possibility of a post-apartheid reconstruction, how important it is that there remains enough talent on the side of liberation to promise a continuing renewal of that struggle.

The downside of my trip? A decade ago I had written of my earlier visit that "after studying South Africa off and on for twenty years I saw little that I didn't expect to see. Yet how much more real—and how chilling." Chilling indeed. As I learned in southern Africa in the summer of 1988, Pretoria's intransigence means that the "inevitable" democratic transformation of South Africa will take rather longer than had been hoped and the costs of transformation will be even greater than I had feared. Chilling, but also inspiring. For there was an "up side," one which bore out my initial hunch that a few risks were worth running in order to touch, once again and at first hand, the "long, relentless arc of South African history." I had stolen a month from Pretoria and I had passed close enough to the cutting edge of revolution in that country—to the people, the organizations (COSATU, the ANC, in particular), and the powerful yet indefinable ambience of resistance—to have sufficient reason to accentuate the positive. I had come away with the knowledge that, whatever the odds, the struggle to realize "transformation" is in good hands. And that these South African "hands"—the people, the organizations, the very spirit of revolution itself—deserve our support.

The profound hypocrisy and inherent barbarism of bourgeois civilization lies unveiled before our eyes, turning from its home, where it assumes respectable forms, to the colonies, where it goes naked.

—Karl Marx, *New York Daily Tribune*, August 8, 1953

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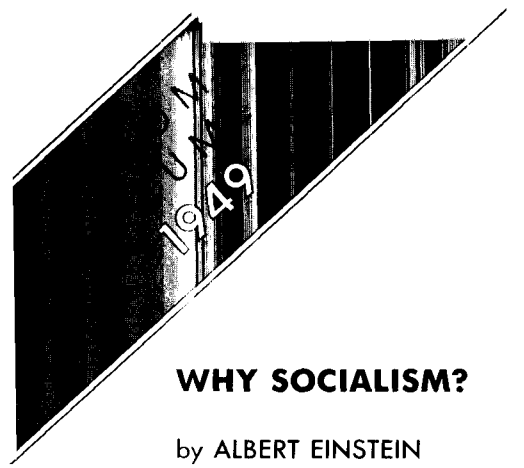

WHY SOCIALISM?

by ALBERT EINSTEIN

Is it advisable for one who is not an expert on economic and social issues to express views on the subject of socialism? I believe for a number of reasons that it is.

Let us first consider the question from the point of view of scientific knowledge. It might appear that there are no essential methodological differences between astronomy and economics: scientists in both fields attempt to discover laws of general acceptability for a circumscribed group of phenomena in order to make the interconnection of these phenomena as clearly understandable as possible. But in reality such methodological differences do exist. The discovery of general laws in the field of economics is made difficult by the circumstance that observed economic phenomena are often affected by many factors which are very hard to evaluate separately. In addition, the experience which has accumulated since the beginning of the so-called civilized period of human history has—as is well known—been largely influenced and limited by causes which are by no means exclusively economic in nature. For example, most of the major states of history owed their existence to conquest. The conquering peoples established themselves, legally and economically, as the privileged class of the conquered country. They seized for themselves a monopoly of the land ownership and appointed a priesthood from among their own ranks. The priests, in control of education, made the class

Albert Einstein, the world-famous physicist, contributed this article to the first issue of *Monthly Review*, which appeared in May 1949.

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division of society into a permanent institution and created a system of values by which the people were thenceforth, to a large extent unconsciously, guided in their social behavior.

But historic tradition is, so to speak, of yesterday; nowhere have we really overcome what Thorstein Veblen called "the predatory phase" of human development. The observable economic facts belong to that phase and even such laws as we can derive from them are not applicable to other phases. Since the real purpose of socialism is precisely to overcome and advance beyond the predatory phase of human development, economic science in its present state can throw little light on the socialist society of the future.

Second, socialism is directed towards a social-ethical end. Science, however, cannot create ends and, even less, instill them in human beings; science, at most, can supply the means by which to attain certain ends. But the ends themselves are conceived by personalities with lofty ethical ideals and—if these ends are not stillborn, but vital and vigorous—are adopted and carried forward by those many human beings who, half unconsciously, determine the slow evolution of society.

For these reasons, we should be on our guard not to overestimate science and scientific methods when it is a question of human problems; and we should not assume that experts are the only ones who have a right to express themselves on questions affecting the organization of society.

Innumerable voices have been asserting for some time now that human society is passing through a crisis, that its stability has been gravely shattered. It is characteristic of such a situation that individuals feel indifferent or even hostile toward the group, small or large, to which they belong. In order to illustrate my meaning, let me record here a personal experience. I recently discussed with an intelligent and well-disposed man the threat of another war, which in my opinion would seriously endanger the existence of mankind, and I remarked that only a supra-national organization would offer protection from that danger. Thereupon my visitor, very calmly and coolly, said to me: "Why are you so deeply opposed to the disappearance of the human race?"

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I am sure that as little as a century ago no one would have so lightly made a statement of this kind. It is the statement of a man who has striven in vain to attain an equilibrium within himself and has more or less lost hope of succeeding. It is the expression of a painful solitude and isolation from which so many people are suffering in these days. What is the cause? Is there a way out?

It is easy to raise such questions, but difficult to answer them with any degree of assurance. I must try, however, as best I can, although I am very conscious of the fact that our feelings and strivings are often contradictory and obscure and that they cannot be expressed in easy and simple formulas.

Man is, at one and the same time, a solitary being and a social being. As a solitary being, he attempts to protect his own existence and that of those who are closest to him, to satisfy his personal desires, and to develop his innate abilities. As a social being, he seeks to gain the recognition and affection of his fellow human beings, to share in their pleasures, to comfort them in their sorrows, and to improve their conditions of life. Only the existence of these varied, frequently conflicting, strivings accounts for the special character of a man, and their specific combination determines the extent to which an individual can achieve an inner equilibrium and can contribute to the well-being of society. It is quite possible that the relative strength of these two drives is, in the main, fixed by inheritance. But the personality that finally emerges is largely formed by the environment in which a man happens to find himself during his development, by the structure of the society in which he grows up, by the tradition of that society, and by its appraisal of particular types of behavior. The abstract concept "society" means to the individual human being the sum total of his direct and indirect relations to his contemporaries and to all the people of earlier generations. The individual is able to think, feel, strive, and work by himself; but he depends so much upon society—in his physical, intellectual, and emotional existence—that it is impossible to think of him, or to understand him, outside the framework of society. It is "society" which provides man with food, clothing, a home, the tools of work,

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language, the forms of thought, and most of the content of thought; his life is made possible through the labor and the accomplishments of the many millions past and present who are all hidden behind the small word "society."

It is evident, therefore, that the dependence of the individual upon society is a fact of nature which cannot be abolished—just as in the case of ants and bees. However, while the whole life process of ants and bees is fixed down to the smallest detail by rigid, hereditary instincts, the social pattern and interrelationships of human beings are very variable and susceptible to change. Memory, the capacity to make new combinations, the gift of oral communication have made possible developments among human beings which are not dictated by biological necessities. Such developments manifest themselves in traditions, institutions, and organizations; in literature; in scientific and engineering accomplishments; in works of art. This explains how it happens that, in a certain sense, man can influence his life through his own conduct, and that in this process conscious thinking and wanting can play a part.

Man acquires at birth, through heredity, a biological constitution which we must consider fixed and unalterable, including the natural urges which are characteristic of the human species. In addition, during his lifetime, he acquires a cultural constitution which he adopts from society through communication and through many other types of influences. It is this cultural constitution which, with the passage of time, is subject to change and which determines to a very large extent the relationship between the individual and society. Modern anthropology has taught us, through comparative investigation of so-called primitive cultures, that the social behavior of human beings may differ greatly, depending upon prevailing cultural patterns and the types of organization which predominate in society. It is on this that those who are striving to improve the lot of man may ground their hopes: human beings are *not* condemned, because of their biological constitution, to annihilate each other or to be at the mercy of a cruel, self-inflicted fate.

If we ask ourselves how the structure of society and the

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cultural attitude of man should be changed in order to make human life as satisfying as possible, we should constantly be conscious of the fact that there are certain conditions which we are unable to modify. As mentioned before, the biological nature of man is, for all practical purposes, not subject to change. Furthermore, technological and demographic developments of the last few centuries have created conditions which are here to stay. In relatively densely settled populations with the goods which are indispensable to their continued existence, an extreme division of labor and a highly-centralized productive apparatus are absolutely necessary. The time—which, looking back, seems so idyllic—is gone forever when individuals or relatively small groups could be completely self-sufficient. It is only a slight exaggeration to say that mankind constitutes even now a planetary community of production and consumption.

I have now reached the point where I may indicate briefly what to me constitutes the essence of the crisis of our time. It concerns the relationship of the individual to society. The individual has become more conscious than ever of his dependence upon society. But he does not experience this dependence as a positive asset, as an organic tie, as a protective force, but rather as a threat to his natural rights, or even to his economic existence. Moreover, his position in society is such that the egotistical drives of his make-up are constantly being accentuated, while his social drives, which are by nature weaker, progressively deteriorate. All human beings, whatever their position in society, are suffering from this process of deterioration. Unknowingly prisoners of their own egotism, they feel insecure, lonely, and deprived of the naive, simple, and unsophisticated enjoyment of life. Man can find meaning in life, short and perilous as it is, only through devoting himself to society.

The economic anarchy of capitalist society as it exists today is, in my opinion, the real source of the evil. We see before us a huge community of producers the members of which are unceasingly striving to deprive each other of the fruits of their collective labor—not by force, but on the whole in faithful

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compliance with legally established rules. In this respect, it is important to realize that the means of production—that is to say, the entire productive capacity that is needed for producing consumer goods as well as additional capital goods—may legally be, and for the most part are, the private property of individuals.

For the sake of simplicity, in the discussion that follows I shall call "workers" all those who do not share in the ownership of the means of production—although this does not quite correspond to the customary use of the term. The owner of the means of production is in a position to purchase the labor power of the worker. By using the means of production, the worker produces new goods which become the property of the capitalist. The essential point about this process is the relation between what the worker produces and what he is paid, both measured in terms of real value. Insofar as the labor contract is "free," what the worker receives is determined not by the real value of the goods he produces, but by his minimum needs and by the capitalists' requirements for labor power in relation to the number of workers competing for jobs. It is important to understand that even in theory the payment of the worker is not determined by the value of his product.

Private capital tends to become concentrated in few hands, partly because of competition among the capitalists, and partly because technological development and the increasing division of labor encourage the formation of the larger units of production at the expense of the smaller ones. The result of these developments is an oligarchy of private capital the enormous power of which cannot be effectively checked even by a democratically organized political society. This is true since the members of legislative bodies are selected by political parties, largely financed or otherwise influenced by private capitalists who, for all practical purposes, separate the electorate from the legislature. The consequence is that the representatives of the people do not in fact sufficiently protect the interests of the underprivileged sections of the population. Moreover, under existing conditions, private capitalists inevitably control, directly or indirectly, the main sources of information (press,

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radio, education). It is thus extremely difficult, and indeed in most cases quite impossible, for the individual citizen to come to objective conclusions and to make intelligent use of his political rights.

The situation prevailing in an economy based on the private ownership of capital is thus characterized by two main principles: first, means of production (capital) are privately owned and the owners dispose of them as they see fit; second, the labor contract is free. Of course, there is no such thing as a *pure* capitalist society in this sense. In particular, it should be noted that the workers, through long and bitter political struggles, have succeeded in securing a somewhat improved form of the "free labor contract" for certain categories of workers. But taken as a whole, the present day economy does not differ much from "pure" capitalism.

Production is carried on for profit, not for use. There is no provision that all those able and willing to work will always be in a position to find employment; an "army of unemployed" almost always exists. The worker is constantly in fear of losing his job. Since unemployed and poorly paid workers do not provide a profitable market, the production of consumers' goods is restricted, and great hardship is the consequence. Technological progress frequently results in more unemployment rather than in an easing of the burden of work for all. The profit motive, in conjunction with competition among capitalists, is responsible for an instability in the accumulation and utilization of capital which leads to increasingly severe depressions. Unlimited competition leads to a huge waste of labor, and to that crippling of the social consciousness of individuals which I mentioned before.

This crippling of individuals I consider the worst evil of capitalism. Our whole educational system suffers from this evil. An exaggerated competitive attitude is inculcated into the student, who is trained to worship acquisitive success as a preparation for his future career.

I am convinced there is only *one* way to eliminate these grave evils, namely through the establishment of a socialist economy, accompanied by an educational system which would

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be oriented toward social goals. In such an economy, the means of production are owned by society itself and are utilized in a planned fashion. A planned economy, which adjusts production to the needs of the community, would distribute the work to be done among all those able to work and would guarantee a livelihood to every man, woman, and child. The education of the individual, in addition to promoting his own innate abilities, would attempt to develop in him a sense of responsibility for his fellow men in place of the glorification of power and success in our present society.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to remember that a planned economy is not yet socialism. A planned economy as such may be accompanied by the complete enslavement of the individual. The achievement of socialism requires the solution of some extremely difficult socio-political problems: how is it possible, in view of the far-reaching centralization of political and economic power, to prevent bureaucracy from becoming all-powerful and overweening? How can the rights of the individual be protected and therewith a democratic counterweight to the power of bureaucracy be assured?

Clarity about the aims and problems of socialism is of greatest significance in our age of transition. Since, under present circumstances, free and unhindered discussion of these problems has come under a powerful taboo, I consider the foundation of this magazine to be an important public service.

The issue is socialism versus capitalism. I am for socialism because I am for humanity. We have been cursed with the reign of gold long enough. Money constitutes no proper basis of civilization. The time has come to regenerate society—we are on the eve of a universal change.

—Eugene V. Debs

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TWO SPIRITUAL REVOLUTIONARIES

by JOEL KOVEL

Miguel Mármol was born in 1905, in Ilopango, El Salvador, near where the air base through which a good deal of the U.S. military presence in Central America is funneled now stands. James Carney was born in Chicago in 1924 to a very proper Roman Catholic family of German-Irish extraction. Mármol grew up a street urchin, who did not know who his father was for many years; he prayed to the Virgin and St. Francis, believed in "spirits," and, as a young adolescent, joined the local unit of the National Guard and toyed with the idea of becoming a soldier. Carney, by contrast, had a conventional and sports-obsessed all-American boyhood, unusual only for its religious devoutness. He won a football scholarship to Jesuit-run St. Louis University, injured his knee, and spent the Second World War as a noncombatant with the U.S. Army.

Miguel Mármol did not become a soldier, but a worker in a shoe factory and one of the founding members of the Salvadoran Communist Party. James Carney became a Jesuit. Mármol still lives, an *eminence grise* of the Salvadoran revolution in exile in Cuba; but Carney was killed in 1983 by security forces in Honduras for revolutionary activity among the peasantry. Thus Father James "Guadelupe" Carney gave his life for the revolution. But Miguel Mármol gave his life, too, in fact several times, the most spectacular being in 1932 when he was shot by a

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firing squad in the course of the infamous *matanza* ordered by the mystical dictator, General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez. In that immense atrocity, more than 30,000 Salvadorans were massacred. Thus Mármol gave his life, but also got it back again, literally rising from the dead and ensuring himself immortality as a symbol of the eternal faith, resilience, and tenacity of his people.

Mármol and Carney are also the authors of extraordinary memoirs documenting their revolutionary practice.[1] Here we must introduce another remarkable figure, the Salvadoran poet-communist Roque Dalton, who spoke with Miguel Mármol in Prague in 1966 and rendered the interview into beautiful vernacular prose, splendidly translated by Kathleen Ross and Richard Schaaf. Unlike Mármol, Dalton is no survivor. He perished at the hands of a rival faction of the People's Revolutionary Army in 1975. In *Miguel Mármol*, Dalton and Mármol produced a work of genius. It is difficult to write about this book because I keep wanting to reread it, or to quote great swatches as a way of sharing the experience. Here is a favorite passage, the dramatic high point of the book, in which Mármol describes his experience with the firing squad:

> Captain Alvarenga asked: "Let's see, which one of you wants to die next." "Me," I shouted, and I took a step forward. The firing squad was on one side of the road and the wall was on the other. The police were sweating, despite the summer chill. My whole body itched and I couldn't scratch myself because my arms were tied. I started to cross the road when I heard a calm voice: "I will die alongside comrade Mármol." It was the Russian. As best we could, we joined hands behind our backs, uniting us, and we stood against the wall feeling proud. The commanding officer gave the order and the first round went over our heads. They didn't touch us and I thought they were just fucking around, to prolong the torture. "You haven't even learned to shoot straight, assholes." I calmly said to them. The police unloaded two more rounds that only grazed us, and Captain Alvarenga started to curse them up and down. With the fourth round they indeed wounded me, in the upper chest, but luckily it didn't go straight through but rather at an angle because of the way I turned when I heard the word, "Fire!" The bullet passed through my left nipple and arm. For me the wound actually felt good, was a relief

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since the blood gushing out of me relieved the pressure in my arm caused by the rope knots. I didn't think about the saints coming down from heaven or anything like that. My mother, yes, I thought of her. But more than anything, I don't know why, even there and in that situation, I felt I was going to get out of that mess, that I wasn't going to die there. At any rate, I collapsed, both feet kicking, from the force of the impact. The Russian didn't go down, even though he was also wounded in the chest or in one shoulder. When some policemen from the firing squad came over to help me get up, I was already on my feet again. "Fuck it," I said to them, "you'll never put an end to us this way." I don't know where the serenity, the feeling of invulnerability came from. Another round. Here, for sure, they hit me good. I felt several blows on my body and one like a sharp ring, like an electric shock going through my whole head. I was thinking clearly.The Russian's body was over mine and still dripping warm blood. I closed my eyes and did what I could to breathe without making any noise, even though I was bleeding from my nose. I heard the truck's motor warming up, but the worst thing was when I was able to hear that criminal Alvarenga ordering them to put one last "coup de grace" into any corpse that showed signs of life. They found Bonilla and Bodanza still alive. I heard Bodanza's voice: "kill us once and for all you sons-of-bitches, with one blast of gunfire." Bobilla shouted out: "Long live comrade Stalin, Death to General Martínez!" And Bodanza was repeating it back. I wanted to repeat it also, but I contained myself. The police insulted them and shot them over and over again. Then they came up to where I was stretched out. They lifted up the body of the Russian, who showed no signs of life. A policeman was going to shoot me, I heard him bolt his rifle, but another said: "That's just feeding gunpowder to the vultures, don't you see his brains all over the place? What we can do is see if he has any money." Later on, I realized that a bullet that struck the Russian in the face had blown his brains out and some of the brain matter fell over my head making it look like it was my brains coming out of the wounds on both my temples. They tore through my pants looking for money. I only had eighty centavos, which is what was left after I gave that traitor Escobar money to go buy some rum. Captain Alvarenga ordered them to cut the ropes from all the corpses, so it'd be easier for the gravediggers to drag them into a common grave the next day. That was when they chopped up Granillo's body with a machete. Then they just went around cutting the ropes, swiping with their machetes.They wounded me badly in the fingers and in the same arm that,

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in any case, was already dead from the bullet wounds. Finally, they left me. For me, centuries had passed and I felt like I'd been reborn. When I heard the truck far enough away, I struggled up and went to see if there wasn't some other comrade alive like me. They were all good and dead. I took Serafin G. Martínez' brand new, tan hat, because I never got used to walking around without a hat.

Dalton's *Miguel Mármol* can be read for many reasons, certainly as a history of El Salvador (and to a lesser extent Guatemala, for Mármol moves back and forth between the two countries, which he regards as fundamentally one), or a study of the labor movement in Central America, a chronicle of the Communist movement in the time of Stalin (there is a particularly fascinating account of a voyage to Moscow in 1930), or simply as a highly enjoyable drama. Or it can be read as the testament of a man who was willing to give all for the sake of the poor and who retains many spiritual elements in his being. From this angle, Mármol's life raises fascinating questions about the relations between faith and politics.

To read Mármol—and Carney—is to be swept along by the sense of an inner strength, compounded out of fidelity, courage, the willingness to risk all for the sake of the people. They are both, to put it in one word, *inspiring* works. That is, they fill us with "spirit." But what do we mean by this? The "spirit of revolution," perhaps, or of communism, of struggle, commitment? All true, but the question is begged unless we understand more fully what "spirit" means.

I should expect that whoever embraces a revolutionary socialist perspective, of whatever kind, would feel inspired by what Carney and Mármol evoke. One might criticize the form taken by their practice—Mármol's allegiance to Stalinism, for example, or Carney's strict Catholicism. Nevertheless, their "spirit" remains an ideal, else the whole idea of revolution is meaningless. This means, however, that every revolutionary socialist goal has a spiritual quality. Yet revolutionary socialists usually take their spirituality for granted, or do not even recognize it as such. We might say that they have spirit, but are not themselves spiritual. Mármol and Carney, however, are

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both self-consciously spiritual in their own way. They are preoccupied with the inner goading that drives them forward into life-sacrificing revolutionary action—and they are aware that there is no easy way of disentangling the religious spiritual urge from the revolutionary spiritual urge. While the Jesuit embraces spirituality, the Salvadoran finds his spirituality—and its religious implications—an embarrassment:

> I'm a Marxist-Leninist who knows he's not familiar with most of Marxism-Leninism, and who's got inside his head many problems that the comrades say don't fit in with Marxism-Leninism, many approaches that the comrades say are incredible in a communist of my age, like for example certain apparent superstitions, bad habits that seem to be religious, etc. I think that in this case . . . we're talking about another kind of problem. I don't believe in God or the saints or the devil or in the Cadejo or the Ciguanaba,* but like the Salvadoran I am, I've got them on the tip of my tongue, and every now and then they come out of me. I don't think this is so important.

Roque Dalton agrees, keeping a distance both from Mármol's old-line communism and his faith.** As Dalton puts it,

> the superstitious atmosphere, firmly rooted in the people, that goes back to indigenous mythology and has created in Mármol himself an undeniable "psychology of the extraordinary and supernatural" that, though it doesn't usually present a problem from the standpoint of his political and philosophical positions, does do so at some particularly intense moments during the course of the testimony.

In one of these "particularly intense moments," Mármol's ambivalence toward his spirituality produces an effect of profound irony. After his escape from death he finds his way—with what tenacity and courage can barely be imagined—to the home of a woman who nurses him back to health.

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*These are Salvadoran native spirits.

**Dalton was born five years after Mármol helped found the Salvadoran Communist Party. To him, Miguel Mármol, no matter how important an individual, belongs to the generation of Latin American communists made obsolete by the emergence of Fidel Castro. Mármol and Dalton represent Salvadoran tendencies which have been more or less harmonized in the formation of the FMLN (tragically less so with the death of Dalton in a sectarian struggle).

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It's true that I don't even like to think about the treatment she used on my torn and stinking chest, a tincture of iodine and alcohol, but the truth is I was in the hands of a saint. In no time my most serious open wounds healed and I was in good enough condition to do exercises to loosen up my muscles and damaged joints. Señora Lucia told me one time that in a little house close to ours another wounded comrade was hiding and that she was taking care of him. This comrade got well before me and went to another hiding place. I never found out who he was, only that he had showed up like me, renting a room, riddled with bullets and stinking of rotting flesh. And from that time on, I bless that good señora and I hope that if God exists, he will also bless her for her revolutionary charity. And I'm saying that even though I'm a communist and I don't believe in God. And that makes it worth more than if a priest had said it.

The passage leaves no doubt that Mármol sees communism as not just the successor to religion, but also religion's superior, a practice of greater authenticity and moral force. But is this "superstition" or a religious "bad habit"—or is it a kind of spiritual response essential for revolutionary action, and perforce drawn from religion? And if so, is religion to be abolished so readily? It is quite doubtful that when Mármol spoke to Dalton he was thinking consciously about the famous passage in Matthew 25, which goes, in part,

"for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?" And the King will answer them, "Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me."

But the point is exactly that he should not have to think consciously about this, since his whole being was shaped by Matthew 25 and the Gospel. It is worth noting that Mármol blesses Señora Lucia only after telling how she cared for *another* "sick stranger." This, after all, is what Mármol himself was doing all his grown life, and it is why the logic of such a life

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would seek forms of revolutionary realization. A Miguel Mármol does not read Marx and Lenin and then decide to become a revolutionary. He is drawn rather by profound sympathy of the sort enunciated in the Gospel and deeply internalized by him, to undertake revolutionary action, and then to find Marxism-Leninism as the adequate expression of his desire. For a person of this kind, "communism," "community," "communion," and "comrade" are only different aspects of the same reality. At the core of Miguel Mármol's spirituality and his communism is action for the other: not the charity of established religion, but "revolutionary charity," which is the only real charity, because it creates the conditions for overcoming itself. This is the rational development of spirituality, just as superstition, with its magical thinking, is the irrational development.* Mármol knew this intuitively as a young man, which is why he turned his spirituality toward communism, setting aside religion with a clear conscience because, "I started to realize . . . that the most beautiful capacity of man is the capacity to struggle, to struggle against injustice and misery, "and because in the end I felt that if God did truly exist, certainly under no circumstances could He be opposed to the struggle of men to be free and happy. More and more, this struggle seemed to me to be the fundamental problem."**

Mármol's is certainly not the only spiritual path toward communism (though it is a major one), but without some such

*As Mármol says of himself, in the real world irrational spirituality coexists with its rational form. The question, as ever, is how decisive and destructive are the irrational elements. Compare Mármol with the murderous General Hernández who ordered the *matanza*. Hernández was always communicating with "spirits" and showed all the degenerate features of a fascist spirituality. This "Nazi sorcerer," as Mármol calls him, "said that it wasn't as serious a sin to kill a man as an ant, because the man is reincarnated in another life cycle, but the ant disappears forever. That's why the thirty thousand Salvadorans he had killed in 1932 never kept him up at night. According to him, they would all be immediately reincarnated."

**The scope of this essay does not permit taking up the important problem of right-wing and fascist spirituality. Needless to say, we would have to show how such spiritual pathways—which occupy so large a place on the political and religious map—are false and self-defeating, because of their allegiance to a ruling class. In any case, the point cannot be too strongly made that many developments which people would not hesitate to call spiritual can be immensely destructive. The spiritual components of Nazism may have been bogus, but that did not prevent the German masses from responding to them.

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path communism or socialism is just an empty shell. But it can also be said that without a socialist path, religion becomes self-mockery and a ruling-class swindle. The insight has been forced upon those religious figures who have developed the theology of liberation. The convergence between socialist revolution and liberation theology is not to be explained idealistically, by textual resemblance, but by a common practical orientation, grounded in a common cultural tradition.

The unfolding of such a logic defines the extraordinary life of James Guadelupe Carney, a man who would not set his religion aside in choosing the socialist path. Carney chose to live simply and to follow the spirit of Jesus where it led him. He discovered that this meant sharing the lives of Honduran peasants. Doing so brought Carney to the same place found by Miguel Mármol: revolution. Carney's book is harder to read than Mármol's. It lacks the literary skill of a Roque Dalton, and is little more, in any case, than a raw manuscript, written by candlelight in the Nicaraguan countryside, then smuggled back to the United States before the author's last, fatal trip to Honduras. It is harder for another reason—one which makes it even more important for us to read than *Miguel Mármol*. And this is because Carney is speaking to his fellow North Americans and telling us that our lives are spiritually lacking.* Sometimes he seems to scold, sometimes he seems too arrogant and overbearing; always he speaks from a religious orientation that few Americans share in this secular age. Someone who says that "to be killed for my following of Christ would be my greatest joy" is narrowing his audience considerably. Five hundred years ago Carney would have struck many a chord, but no longer. So it will easy to dismiss what he has to say—but profoundly mistaken, because there is so much greatness to the man. James Carney may have been an "extremist," suffering from all the contradictions of that position. And yet the extreme Carney went to is at one end of the main moral axis of Western

*Carney claims he is primarily writing for Honduran peasants, and incidentally for middle and upperclass North Americans. I am sure he believed it to be so, but the book nevertheless reads like an exhortation to his own people, his own family, to the self he is trying to leave behind.

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civilization. A North American reader is bound to be haunted by the spirit of Padre Carney, just as Carney was haunted by the spirit of Jesus.

Along the way to the extreme, we learn a great deal about the recent history of Honduras and the day-to-day struggle for existence in that immiserated land. History has condemned Honduras to be the infinitely compliant tool of imperialism. Yet recent events have confounded the expectation of the U.S. security apparatus that the Central American republic would forever remain its doormat and aircraft carrier. Needless to add, such developments do not materialize from the air. There is a rarely told history of struggle in Honduras, a history in which Father James Carney played a considerable role and which his memoirs illuminate.

But the principal theme is Carney's metamorphosis (to use the term he has himself chosen) from naive Catholic jock to Marxist-Leninist—and no less Catholic—revolutionary. We should add, a missionary of revolution. Carney does not simply argue that Christians should be open to, or tolerant of Marxist revolution. No, he is claiming that to be an authentic Christian requires that one be such a revolutionary. This goes considerably beyond the "option for the poor" which defines liberation theology, or rather it takes that "option" to its logical conclusion—full-scale revolution, armed if necessary—and claims that this is God's plan. In sharp distinction to Miguel Mármol's tolerance for contradiction, James Carney, ever the Jesuit, insists on a systematic justification of his spirituality:

> The base of my spiritual life was always to be a real Ignation [i.e., based on St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuit Order], "contemplative in action," finding God in all things, in all events, and abandoning myself into our Father's hands in order to be guided by the Spirit of Jesus living and acting in me. . . . I can see his Holy Spirit directing the evolution of the whole universe, of all nations, and of each person toward himself, toward his Kingdom of love and brotherhood. . . .
>
> Another important basis of my spirituality is the idea of voluntarily identifying oneself with the poor, of incarnating oneself as much

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as possible in the poor, the working class. This idea is directly from the Gospel, and it is also in the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius. . . .

The Spirit of God-Jesus is in everyone and, by his actual grace influencing their decisions, is directing the dialectical evolution of the world toward the Parousia, the second coming of Christ, the Omega Point (when the whole universe will be united in Christ) which will be the definitive Kingdom of God. This is the plan of God revealed in the Bible. No movement, political party, or religion (including the Catholic church, the priesthood and the religious congregations) and no socioeconomic system is an end in itself, but are simply means of constructing the Kingdom of God in this world. This Kingdom of God will be paradise, the perfect society of brothers and sisters, all equal, sharing everything they have in love. To reach this goal will require the continual perfecting of all men and women and their socioeconomic systems of ways of living in society, that is, it will require the continual twofold revolution: the cultural revolution and the socioeconomic revolution.

There is not much I can say about the theological basis of these passages. I am sure, however, that *To Be A Revolutionary* will never get an *imprimatur* from the present Vatican administration. Cardinal Ratzinger, the pope's inquisitor, would be quite incensed by the Jesuit's reading of holy writ.[2] The holy pontiff himself would be apoplectic over the notions that God's Kingdom can be constructed in *this* world, and—heaven forbid!—that the Catholic Church is not an end in itself but a means to revolution. John Paul II would undoubtedly see the dread hand of Marxism in this document, as he should, for Carney's praxis among the Honduran poor gradually but inexorably led him to the conclusion that historical materialism was essential if the "option for the poor" was to go beyond charity and toward empowerment.

Not too many of his fellow religious people are going to follow Carney. Indeed, the pope seems to be slowly gaining the upper hand in his struggle to restore Catholic spirituality to its traditional otherworldly and reactionary role. Of course, the motives for not following Carney go considerably beyond the doctrinal. As written on the cover of his book, "he took the gospel literally, so they killed him."

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Questions of Spirituality and Revolution

We can do no more than suggest a few of the broader questions which arise from the consideration of these two exceptional and exemplary lives.

First, it would seem useful to focus upon *spirituality* as an entity more elementary than religion. It is Mármol's and Carney's spirituality which moves us, and not their particular religious elaboration of it; and it is their spirituality which is turned to revolutionary ends. The term is almost impossible to define within a brief compass, though a serviceable beginning might be given by the following: *spirituality is the breaking through of the limits of the self and the reaching beyond, even at the cost of one's life.* Fidelity, courage, the willingness to risk all, action for the other, are spiritual qualities—though not, of course, the only spiritual qualities, nor are they wholly spiritual.

From this standpoint, spirituality is a basic feature of the human condition, to be realized or not, for better or worse, while religion is a way people bind and express spirituality under specific circumstances—and revolutionary action becomes another mode of spiritual expression under specific circumstances. Aside from whatever other merits it may have, this point of view might be helpful to those in the socialist and revolutionary tradition who have been rethinking their relations to religion but who do not consider themselves religious as such (for subjective as well as objective reasons, having to do with the politically backward, repressive, and irrational nature of actually existing religion). In other words, the theoretical issue is not "synthesizing" Marxism and religion, but understanding the spirituality of Marxism and of religion in various concrete contexts, and mediating the two through their spirituality. This involves recognizing a (non-religious) spirituality in Marxism without vitiating or idealizing the essential core of historical materialism.[3] And this in turn means that the "spirit" needs to be seen as a material category. Spirit, in other words, is not opposed to the body, or matter, but is realized with the emancipation of the body and matter.*

*We might add, in line with traditional spiritual thought, that the spirit, while not antagonistic to matter or the body, is antagonistic to expropriated possessions. I should think that Marx would agree.

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This approach enables us to take a better look at the specific importance of Christianity in the history of revolutionary movements, without being saddled with Christian chauvinism, or thinking that some kind of specifically "Christian-Marxist synthesis" is the logical outcome of the convergence between religion and radical politics. In my opinion such a synthesis is neither necessary nor desirable. In fact it may be impossible, and it certainly is not attractive to many radicals who do not practice the Christian religion but are spiritually inclined and willing to explore this dimension further.

Notwithstanding, Christianity has played a special role in the Western revolutionary tradition, and remains the religion most concretely involved in active struggles around the globe. It seems that Christian spirituality, of all the world religions, has most deeply incorporated the dialectic of class struggle within itself. The connection of Marx and Engels with the radical Reformation, or of Lenin's Bolshevik party with Ignatius Loyola's Jesuits only begins to suggest the political dynamism drawn from the Christian faith.[4] Still, actually existing Christianity must be transformed if it is to be drawn into revolutionary struggle. Both of our revolutionaries did this. Miguel Mármol dropped formal Christian aspirations at a young age, and retained only the core of its revolutionary charity. But Mármol's story includes more than this. We must recognize as well that for Mármol, the revolutionary spirit also included many elements drawn from the pre-Columbian native culture of his people; indeed, this proved at least as strong as the purely Christian influence. In fact, it is precisely the "Indianization" of Christianity, with its retention of the spirit of an organic community, which has so energized the transformation of all the movements around the world (many of course non-Indian) summed up under the rubric of liberation theology. I am sure that this "reverse mission," from the colonized to the colonizer, got under the skin of James Carney as well, and led him onward toward the Omega Point of his utopian vision.

The question, finally, is not whether religion and revolution are antagonists, but how their underlying spiritualities work together. Revolution does not supplant religion, nor can it abolish the religious impulse, for this is its very own spiritual

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impulse. Nor does revolution somehow perfect or transcend religion. Rather socialist revolution signifies, in the words of Marx, the starting point for real human history. As Miguel Mármol and James Carney show, it is also the starting point for real human spirituality.

NOTES

1. Roque Dalton, *Miguel Mármol*, tr. Kathleen Ross and Richard Schaaf (Willimantic, CT: Curbstone Press, 1987). Padre J. Guadelupe Carney, *To be a Revolutionary* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987).
2. See my "The Vatican Strikes Back," *MR* April 1985.
3. A beginning has been made with respect to Marx himself. See Jose Porfirio Miranda's *Marx Against the Marxists* (Orbis, 1982), for a brilliant discussion of this theme.
4. See Ludo Abicht, "Loyola, Lenin, and the Road to Liberation," (MR, October 1984). The similarity between the Bolsheviks and the Jesuits, both tightly controlled ascetic groups of political intellectuals with long-range, radically emancipatory ambitions, does not prove any kind of direct lineage. It does suggest, however, a basic pattern of spiritual evolution occurring at various historical moments.

Posterity has picked practically all its heroes from the agitators. They are the saints and holy men of our religions.

—Heywood Broun

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THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE MASS MEDIA: AN INTERVIEW WITH EDWARD S. HERMAN

by ROBERT W. McCHESNEY

Over the past generation, it has become increasingly clear to those on the left that the U.S. mass media, far from performing an autonomous and adversarial role in U.S. society, actively frame issues and promote news stories that serve the needs and concerns of the elite. Moreover, the importance of the leading corporate mass media in contemporary politics radically transcends the role of the mass media in earlier times. Hence, the Left has begun to pay considerable attention to how the media are structured and controlled and how they operate. Nevertheless, the ideology of the "free press" has proven to be a difficult adversary for left critics; as the media's operations are central to the modern polity, their legitimacy is shielded by layers and layers of ideological obfuscation.

Recently, left analysis of the media has been enriched by the publication of *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (Pantheon, 1988), by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky. This book promises to be a seminal work in critical media analysis and to open a door through which future media analysis will follow. In *Manufacturing Consent*, Herman and Chomsky provide a systematic "propaganda model" to account for the behavior of the corporate news media in the United States. They preface their discussion of the propaganda model by noting their fundamental belief that the mass media

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"serve to mobilize support for the special interests that dominate the state and private support for the special interests that dominate the state and private activity." Although propaganda is not the *sole* function of the media, it is "a very important aspect of their overall service"(p. xi), especially "in a world of concentrated wealth and major conflicts of class interest" (p. 1).

Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky are certainly well-qualified to provide a simple yet powerful model that explains how the media function to serve the large propaganda requirements of the elite. Together and individually, they have written numerous articles and books which have chronicled the ways in which the U.S. media have actively promoted the agenda of the elite, particularly in regard to U.S. activities in the Third World. *Manufacturing Consent* is a work of tremendous importance for scholars and activists alike.

Herman and Chomsky quickly dismiss the standard mainstream critique of radical media analysis that accuses it of offering some sort of "conspiracy" theory for media behavior; rather, they argue, media bias arises from "the preselection of right-thinking people, internalized preconceptions, and the adaptation of personnel to the constraints" of a series of objective filters they present in their propaganda model. Hence the bias occurs largely through self-censorship, which explains the superiority of the U.S. mass media as a propaganda system: it is far more credible than a system which relies on official state censorship, although in performance the dominant media serve the agenda of the elite every bit as much as state organs do on behalf of the ruling bureaucracies in Eastern Europe.

The credibility and legitimacy of the media system is also preserved by the media's lack of complete agreement on all issues. Indeed, there is vigorous debate and dispute over many issues, as Herman and Chomsky readily acknowledge. They contend, however, that debate within the dominant media is limited to "responsible "opinions acceptable to some segment of the elite. On issues where the elite are in general consensus, the media will always toe the line. No dissent will

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then be countenanced, let alone acknowledged, except, when necessary for ridicule or derision.

In their propaganda model, Herman and Chomsky present a series of five "filters" to account for why the dominant U.S. media invariably serve as propagandists for the interests of the elite. Only stories with a strong orientation to elite interests can pass through the five filters unobstructed and receive ample media attention. The model also explains how the media can conscientiously function when even a superficial analysis of the evidence would indicate the preposterous nature of many of the stories that receive ample publicity in the press and on the network news broadcasts.

The first filter that influences media content is that ownership of the media is highly concentrated among a few dozen of the largest for-profit corporations in the world. Many of these corporations have extensive holdings in other industries and nations. Objectively, their needs for profit severely influence the news operations and overall content of the media. Subjectively, there is a clear conflict of interest when the media system upon which self-government rests is controlled by a handful of corporations and operated in their self-interest. The second filter is that of advertising, which has colonized the U.S. mass media and is responsible for most of the media's income. Herman and Chomsky review much of the evidence concerning the numbing impact of commercialism upon media content.

The third filter is that of sourcing, where "the mass media are drawn into a symbiotic relationship with powerful sources of information by economic necessity and reciprocity of interest" (p. 14). The media rely heavily upon news provided them by corporate and government sources, which have themselves developed enormous bureaucracies to provide this material to the media. They have developed great expertise at "managing" the media. In effect, these bureaucracies subsidize the media and the media must be careful not to antagonize such an important supplier. Furthermore, these corporate and government sources are instantly credible by accepted journalistic practices. Anti-elite sources, on the other hand, are regarded

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with utmost suspicion and have tremendous difficulty passing successfully through this filter.

Herman and Chomsky's fourth filter is the development of right-wing corporate "flak" producers such as Accuracy in Media to harass the mass media and to put pressure upon them to follow the corporate agenda. This filter was developed extensively in the 1970s when major corporations and wealthy right-wingers became increasingly dissatisfied with political developments in the West and with media coverage. These flak producers have actively promoted the (absurd) notion that the media are bastions of liberalism and fundamentally hostile to capitalism and the "defense" of "freedom" around the world. While ostensibly antagonistic to the media, these flak machines provide the media with legitimacy and are treated quite well by the media.

The final filter is the ideology of anticommunism, which is integral to Western political culture and provides the ideological oxygen which makes the propaganda model operate so vigorously. Anticommunism has been ingrained into acceptable journalistic practices in the United States, to the point that even in periods of "detente" it is fully appropriate and expected for journalists to frame issues in terms of "our side" versus the communist "bad guys."

Furthermore, anticommunist ideology is essential to making the double standard of the propaganda model work effectively. As the authors note, "when anticommunist fervor is aroused, the demand for serious evidence in support for claims of 'communist' abuses is suspended [by the media], and charlatans can thrive as evidential sources" (p. 25). Conversely, for journalists or editors to challenge the anticommunist doctrine as well as pass through the other four filters, they "must meet far higher standards; in fact standards are often imposed that can barely be met in the natural sciences" (p. 291).

The bulk of *Manufacturing Consent* is made up of case studies, in which Herman and Chomsky analyze the validity of the propaganda model for explaining media coverage of five major sets of recent news stories. Herman and Chomsky present the facts in each case and then thoroughly dissect the

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treatment of the story by the elite media: *The New York Times*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and CBS News in particular. Each chapter is meticulously researched and most draw heavily on the authors' earlier works in these areas.

Chapter two compares the treatment by the media of the murder of Polish priest Jerzy Popieluszko in 1984 with the treatment of hundreds of prominent victims of death squads in Central America in the 1980s. As Herman and Chomsky forcefully establish, the propaganda model generates "worthy victims" and "unworthy victims," depending upon their relationship to elite interests. Media coverage is extensive and full of outrage for the former, while it is generally unsympathetic, if it exists at all, for the latter. Similarly, Chapter three reveals how the media covered the elections in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua earlier this decade exactly as one would anticipate from the propaganda model. Chapter four tracks the media treatment of the Bulgarian-KGB "plot" to murder the Pope in the early 1980s. A right-wing concoction, this ludicrous story received extensive and generous coverage as it passed through the filters of the propaganda model with flying colors.

Almost one-half of *Manufacturing Consent*, chapters five and six, is dedicated to applying the propaganda model to news coverage of the Vietnam war and the developments in Laos and Cambodia since the late 1960s. These chapters are of particular importance, because they take dead aim on the current, almost universally accepted thesis that the media were opposed to the war and responsible for turning the public against it. To the contrary, the media continued to present the war in a manner consistent with elite interests until the very end, as the propaganda model would anticipate. As for Cambodia, it provides a striking example of how the propaganda model operates; the U.S. destruction of the countryside and civil society prior to 1975 was scarcely acknowledged by the media, while the later atrocities under the Khmer Rouge were the basis of extraordinary outrage with minimal concern for accuracy.

In the concluding chapter, Herman and Chomsky demon-

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strate that the Watergate affair—the oft-purported high-water mark of the vigorous and feisty free press defending the constitution and bringing down a corrupt regime—actually conformed to the propaganda model, being an example of the media responding to a crisis among the elite. The chapter discusses some of the obvious limitations of the corporate media system for the media requirements of a genuinely democratic society and suggests that progressives will have to put media restructuring on their political agendas.

In the interview that follows, Edward Herman answered a series of questions concerning some of the implications and issues arising from *Manufacturing Consent*. Since the interview is with Edward Herman, it is possible that Noam Chomsky may not agree with every point and nuance.

Robert McChesney: Why did you elect to use the term "elite" rather than ruling class?

Edward S. Herman: "Ruling class" has become a cliché that pegs a writer on the ideological spectrum, perhaps unfairly. We have tried to avoid language that arouses ire without serving any useful analytical purpose. And in our work, elite serves as well as ruling class.

RM: Do you perceive this elite fundamentally in class terms, i.e. is it best understood as being comprised of capitalists and the highest level managers of advanced capitalism?

ESH: Yes.

RM: You elect to term the ideological filter "anticommunist." Why is this more appropriate than terming it more broadly the "dominant ideology," which might permit the filter's extension to areas that do not lend themselves to anticommunist interpretation but, nonetheless, are critical to elite interests?

ESH: This is a reasonable suggestion and maybe we should have done this. Other elements of the dominant ideology, like the benevolence of one's own government and the merits of private enterprise, are referred to at various points in the book, but in discussing filters we wanted to

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focus on the ideological element that has been the most important as a control and disciplinary mechanism in the U.S. political economy.

RM: The hypothesis that the media will never legitimize ideas or positions that do not have some representation among the elite seems virtually ironclad. How do mainstream scholars and the dominant media respond to this point? How have they responded to your model and previous work on the media in general?

ESH: The mainstream hasn't noticed our model yet. This book represents our first extensive statement of a model. It will be interesting to see how it is treated, especially to see if it will be dismissed as a "conspiracy theory" despite our pointing out very carefully in the preface that our model is close to a "free market" analysis and does not rely on conspiracy at all.

RM: This hypothesis also has very serious implications for activists in the United States whose very political agenda is centered around opposition to elite interests and elite control of U.S. society. What does the propaganda model suggest regarding how anti-elite progressive political movements will be characterized in the media?

ESH: It suggests that they will be systematically denigrated and denied reasonable access. This of course was nicely illustrated by the treatment of Jesse Jackson and the Rainbow Coalition in this election.

RM: How would you characterize media treatment of the Jackson candidacy?

ESH: As he was challenging some major priorities of the elite, one would expect him to be treated badly by the mass media, and he was in many ways: nitpicking, the emphasis on non-electability, an inordinate focus on his mistakes and associations that would be seen as damaging in the U.S. political context (Castro, PLO, Hymie, etc.) and, of course, a refusal to present and debate his program.

RM: All of the case studies dealt with issues concerning U.S. foreign policy or international issues. Is the propaganda model equally applicable to domestic politics? Are there

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are qualifications you would make to the model before you would apply it to media coverage of domestic issues?

ESH: We think it is very much applicable to domestic issues as well, although it will be somewhat qualified by two things: the greater likelihood of elite conflict, and the fact that there are non-elite domestic interests—the poor, social workers, victims of Love Canals, etc.—who, though relatively weak, have more voice than murdered Vietnamese or Guatemalan peasants. We had intended a chapter on some domestic issue, like the Reagan attack on EPA, or homelessness, or the redistribution of income, and the mass media reporting of these matters, but ran out of time and space. We may address domestic and other omitted case studies in separate articles or in a supplementary volume. Incidentally, one of my favorite books—*Images of Welfare* by Peter Golding and Sue Middleton—shows that a propaganda model works well in looking at the media's handling of "welfare" in Great Britain.

RM: Considering the extensive work Chomsky and you have done on the Middle East, it was surprising that this was not included as a case study. Why was this?

ESH: Again, time and limitations on the size of the book was a factor, plus the fact that Chomsky did a fine job of analyzing the U.S. press on the Middle East in his *Fateful Triangle.*

RM: How would you evaluate the media coverage of the Palestinian uprising?

ESH: Overall, very bad, with some notable individual exceptions in both print and broadcasting media. Given the savagery and scope of the attacks on unarmed women and children, the large-scale imprisonments, and the terrible conditions imposed on the prisoners, the media coverage amounts to a virtual cover-up. Such assaults on workers in Poland or any minority group (especially Jews) in the Soviet Union would have produced massive coverage and frenzied indignation. Koppel's *Nightline* program on which he allowed Palestinians to describe their experiences was

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almost unique—Palestinian victims are usually voiceless and seldom humanized. Their victimization is filtered through Israeli and official U.S. (and coopted "expert") sources.

RM: Have there been any significant developments in media coverage of Nicaragua and El Salvador in light of the peace agreement?

ESH: Since the Guatemala Peace accords were signed the U.S. mass media have outdone themselves in obfuscation. First, they have regularly refused to acknowledge that the document says that the most important condition for peace is that all forms of aid by outside parties to insurgents be terminated. As this threatens U.S. intervention, the loyal U.S. media have played dumb and contributed to the Democrats posture that in voting "humanitarian" aid to the contras they were keeping within the bounds of the accords. Second, they have focused incessantly on Nicaragua's actions relating to the accords, although it has clearly made the most extensive efforts to meet their requirements. Third, they have largely suppressed information on the increasing terror in El Salvador, featuring heavily CIA-sponsored "unrest" in Nicaragua, ignoring serious anti-labor violence in the client state. Until Jim Wright spoke up, the very obvious deliberate U.S.-sponsored destabilization ("Chileanization") was off the press agenda. A propaganda model works beautifully in understanding the main thrust of press coverage in Central America.

RM: In the context of the propaganda model, how would you compare of the media treatment of the U.S. downing of the Iranian jetliner in 1988 to the treatment of the Soviet downing of KAL 007 in 1983?

ESH: The propaganda model fits perfectly. A little-noted fact in the discussion of the KAL 007 shootdown is that the administration was able to claim falsely that the Soviets knew it was a civilian plane, and get away with this very deliberate act of disinformation for a very long time. The press collaboration in allowing a lie to be institutionalized

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and assuring that its ultimate exposure involved the administration in no costs, is high-order propaganda service.

RM: Your most recent research addresses media coverage of the U.S. withdrawal from UNESCO. Did this coverage conform to the expectations of the propaganda model?

ESH: It exceeded these expectations. An outright government propaganda agency couldn't have done better. A forthcoming book by me, Herbert Schiller, and William Preston, Jr., put out by the Institute for Media Analysis and University of Minnesota Press, analyses this in detail.

RM: How would you apply the propaganda model to the operations of PBS?

ESH: We do discuss it briefly in a footnote. PBS has done better over the years in presenting dissenting views than the commercial media, despite the government's role in its organization and financing. This shows how terrible the commercial media are. The restraints stemming from commercial and profit interests outweigh the limitations stemming from government quasi-control. This is why the right wing hates PBS and urges its liquidation, or at least keeping it on a year-to-year budget and increasing its dependence on advertising. I don't think PBS could ever become a systematic voice of serious dissent, but it can provide more than the networks, and more honest reformism.

RM: What is the range of improvement within the existing media system?

ESH: In the short run, very little. A political turnabout is needed to constrain and weaken commercial control, widen access to radio and TV, and strengthen public, educational, and community radio and TV. A reinvigorated labor movement and grassroots organization and recognition of the importance of the media are probably a precondition for even modest alteration of the status quo.

RM: Can a journalist survive within the dominant media *without* internalizing the filters?

ESH: Theoretically, yes. But most don't. It can be done if you are willing to live something of a double life, not make

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much progress in the organization, and suffer continuous compromises on your principles. The strain can be great.

RM: In the conclusion, you seemed to indicate that media activists should concentrate their efforts upon getting broadcast channels. Why the emphasis upon broadcast media?

ESH: Because of their ability to reach large numbers whose class interest should make them more amenable to critical messages.

RM: You conclude at the very end of *Manufacturing Consent* that in the long run progressives need to put media issues in their political agendas. How important is media restructuring to a general progressive agenda?

ESH: Very important. Control over definitions of reality, the agendas that people are allowed to think about, the ability to reiterate messages and manipulate symbols are basic ingredients of power. Because the media as constituted will not allow Jesse Jackson's agenda to be discussed and debated, but will push the "government on our back," burden of welfare, Soviet threat, and similar ideological messages, the Left is at a huge disadvantage in the battlefield of ideas and symbols. It is always on the defensive. This reflects its underlying position of institutional weakness, but the two interact. Media control strengthens institutional control, and vice versa. Power has to be gained on both fronts.

RM: Aside from your notion of working for more access to broadcast channels, can you think of any other tangible proposals to help construct a media system better suited to the needs of a self-governing society?

ESH: Access should include ownership, not merely an occasional program or appearance. We have to start from the bottom. Grassroots organizations have to become more media-oriented and more concerned to reach out to similar groups and beyond. We can't neglect progressive print media either.

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CORRESPONDENCE

RELIGION AND EVOLUTION

by Joe Owens

In his essay "Two Kinds of Atheism" (MR, February 1988), George Fish reflects sympathetically, but still condescendingly, on the role of religion in human evolution. Although he abjures the crudity of rationalist atheism and advocates a more dialectical, contextual Marxist atheism, his final conclusion is that religion is merely a product of human ingenuity and that even its most enlightened forms must eventually be transcended.

If we could take dialectics a step further, we might discern that there is a fallacy in asserting simply that religion is a creation of human culture. Rather, human culture, or humanity itself as a species, might be said to be a product of religion. To illustrate by analogy, we might consider: which evolved first, language or the human mind? I believe most thinkers would agree that the two evolved together, dialectically. There could be no mind without language, nor language without mind.

If such dialectical evolution is necessary in the intellectual realm, no less would it be so in the moral, which pertains more directly to the religious. In his essay, "Religion's Role in Human Evolution: The Missing Link Between Ape-man's Selfish Genes and Civilized Altruism," Ralph Wendell Burhoe explores the problem of how genetic evolution, which is essentially and inevitably selfish within a given species, could have created the generally altruistic ethic of the world's great religions and cultures.[1] His argument is too complex to reproduce here, but it concludes that religion, altruism, and human civilization were all inextricably interconnected in their origins. Together with the birth of language, the birth of religion can be said to be constitutive of human culture. To quote Burhoe:

Joe Owens lives and works in Honduras.

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> Religion . . . is the key and hitherto missing link in the scientific explanation of how ape-men are transformed to civilized altruism. Religion—as I am using the term—is the system of rituals, myths, rational theologies, etc., that constitute and convey our basic heritage of culturally communicated values. (p. 217)
>
> Religions are cybernetic mechanisms and not simply the opiates, indeed, as Karl Marx suggested. That is, religions present the other side inherent in any control mechanisms: the stimulus to action as well as the prevention of overloads that terrorize and immobilize. . . . Religions have been the source of moral and other stimulus in our sociocultural control mechanism. They have been indeed a vital mechanism for the possibility of altruism to the total community beyond the nuclear family. (p. 220)

While George Fish's essay is a fine contribution to the debate about Marxism and religion, I feel it does not go far enough in debunking the false conceptions of religion. Although Marx's ideas on religion were far more nuanced and profound than those of the shallow rationalism criticized in the essay, even Marx's ideas were influenced by a scientific worldview that was deterministic and mechanistic in a way that modern science does not allow.

As Marxists, I believe that we still have much to learn about the dynamics of religion in the course of human evolution. To the readers of MR, I would heartily recommend another publication, *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*,[2] as well as Burhoe's book, *Towards a Scientific Theology*. In the journal, top-rate scientists, philosophers, and theologians engage in provocative debate about the interrelations between the "material" world we know through the sciences and the "spiritual" world we know through our culture. Marxists have much to contribute to this exchange, even as we are learning that the world is not so easily separable into "material" and "spiritual" as we may once have thought.

NOTES

1. In Ralph Wendell Burhoe, *Towards a Scientific Theology* (Christian Journals Ltd., 760 Somerset St, W. Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, 1981).
2. *Zygon*, Editorial Offices, Rollins College, Winter Park, Florida 32789.

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BOOKS

REMAPPING THE U.S. LEFT

by Robin D.G. Kelley

Marxism in the United States: Remapping the History of the American Left, by Paul Buhle. London and New York: Verso, 1987. 299 pp. $12.95.

Paul Buhle's cogent and provocative study of U.S. Marxism embraces much more than its modest title implies. In many ways, this single volume challenges the entire edifice of modern U.S. cultural and political history. Creatively utilizing hitherto neglected German, Yiddish, and Italian language sources, oral history, primary documents, and recent research, Buhle constructs an engrossing and witty reinterpretation of American radicalism that places race, ethnicity, gender, and culture at its center. Transcending narrow, dogmatic definitions of "Marxism," the author finds within culture the secret to the U.S. Left's successes and failures.

Utopianism and millenarianism among native-born radicals and the cultural alienation of immigrants set the tone for the early evolution of Marxism in the United States. German-American Marxists linked to the First International held fast to a narrow economism and generally rejected the iconoclastic, utopian, and religious roots of native American radicalism. Their failure to understand reform traditions rooted in abolitionism and women's rights movements created a deep chasm in the class struggle. The immigrant Jewish Left, radicalized by slum conditions, anti-Semitism, and an introspective search for identity also brought radical cultural traditions from the old country—traditions which tapped roots

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ranging from religion to anarchism. Unfortunately, these rich radical traditions hardly expanded beyond the immigrants' ghettos.

The crisis of the 1890s and its aftermath created conditions for a serious socialist challenge. The failure of various forms of American radicalism—populism, the Knights of Labor, the Pullman strike—compounded by depression and the deskilling of craft labor, convinced substantial numbers of working people and reformers that socialism might solve the current crisis. Led by a dynamic labor leader of folk-hero proportions, Eugene Debs, the Socialist Party set out to build a new world. However, the Socialists mistakenly looked to craft unions and, like generations of radicals before them, ignored blacks, women, new immigrants, and unskilled workers. The IWW attempted to tap these neglected sources of American radicalism, but opposition from all sides, including the Left, rendered their challenge feeble and ephemeral.

The Russian Revolution, Buhle points out, did not lead to immigrant insularity nor was it *the* major catalyst for rebellion in the United States. On the contrary, American conditions and wartime change gave birth to uprisings and radical cultural transformations that were tragically ignored by Americans looking east toward the red dawn. The events of 1919, women's suffrage, and black radicalism were ignored by militants inspired by the Third International. However, Leninism did place imperialism on the analytical agenda of U.S. Marxists, leading in turn to the Left's first critical discussion of the "Negro Question." Leninism, for all its faults in the United States (particularly its authoritarian tendencies and its repudiation of women's struggles), initially rejected vulgar class analysis, encouraged ethnic expression, and proclaimed black struggle as revolutionary; but a reassertion of centralized control changed all that.

Buhle's discussion of Communism in the United States brilliantly unveils perspectives from rank-and-file ethnics, native-born Americans, blacks, and women. Rejecting the notion that Party leaders—national or international—were merely puppeteers, he paints a portrait of a malleable, complex movement in which working people brought their cultural traditions to various layers of organization. These traditions defined their relationship to the Party and were often manifested in popular forms. The CP's failure to move beyond the everyday problems of workers and develop alternative ways of thinking about total transformation was, to a certain extent, the seed of its own destruction. Cut off from prewar traditions and devoid of a rich theoretical heritage, popular-front "New Dealism" subsequent-

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ly replaced Marxist analysis, leaving the Party unequipped to confront mass consumerism and mass production in the 1930s and 1940s.

Buhle exhumes Marxism from the 1950s—an age when the soil of anti-Communism buried the rumblings of independent radicals. Ironically, as "New Deal" Communists faced HUAC, incarceration, and FBI surveillance, a significant yet disparate group of thinkers attempted to solve new problems in the period of Pax Americana. The Communist Party lacked the analytical tools to deal with alienation in an age of potential nuclear annihilation and mass commodity culture. As Buhle insightfully points out, a rich heritage of U.S. Marxism flowered in the late 1940s and 1950s. C.L.R. James, C. Wright Mills, William A. Williams, Paul Baran, Paul Sweezy, and several Frankfurt School theorists abandoned vulgar Old Left economism and provided trenchant interpretations of imperialism, mass consumer culture, working-class resistance, and U.S. class relations. These savants were the unwitting transmission belts for New Left Marxism. I was dismayed, however, by Buhle's omission of sociologist Oliver C. Cox, whose *Class, Caste, and Race* (1948), *The Foundations of Capitalism* (1959), *Capitalism and American Leadership* (1962), and *Capitalism as a System* (1964) contributed critical insights into the dynamics of race and class on a comparative scale and the emergence of capitalism as a "world system."

Buhle's discussion of the "New Left," at once a personal memoir and an objective account, is probably the most provocative chapter. The conditions for radical rebellion were unique: the atomic age had undermined the Old Left dictum that socialism was inevitable, and the totalitarian quashing of prewar Marxism compelled new student radicals to begin at the beginning. Paradoxically, it was an ideal environment for creative thinking.

Afro-American resistance incubated the nascent New Left. Initially attracted to black life through black popular culture and subsequently politicized by Southern civil-rights struggles, antiwar activism, and (much later) women's liberation, the emerging New Left repudiated the older dogmatism of U.S. Marxism. Moreover, these younger revolutionaries of the 1960s absorbed the moral and spiritual critique of imperialism and recuperated utopianism. By critiquing late capitalism as a way of life, the New Left searched for real, all-encompassing alternatives—a revolutionary counterculture.

The New Left's decline, Buhle correctly explains, resulted from internal confusion, external repression, a failure to explain and analyze the movement's broader goals, and the unfortunate rebirth of

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sectarianism. In light of his own insights into mass culture, Buhle might have added one more reason: the commercial usurpation of New Left counterculture and symbols. The ability of television, film, and print media to disguise old values in radical-looking (or sounding) forms—a phenomenon of mass culture—might be Marxism's greatest challenge. To take one example of the late 60s and early 70s, the hit TV series "The Mod Squad" introduced a young, interracial crime-fighting team hip to the young generation's vernacular and draped in cool attire. Yet this group protected the "establishment" from long-haired anarchists and folks whose "demands" were unreasonable.

This observation, however, does not point to a shortcoming in the book. On the contrary, it illustrates the extent to which Buhle's "remapping" of U.S. history sheds light on other areas of inquiry. For example, when explaining black radicals' search for Marxist alternatives in the late 1960s, he briefly notes that many turned to African and other Third World sources. Yet, if we were to apply his insights into immigrant diaspora politics to the resurgence of Afro-American Marxism in the late 1960s, we could not ignore the significance of armed struggle in the Portuguese colonies, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. Often more attuned to African politics and revolutionaries such as Amilcar Cabral than to events in Vietnam, Afro-American student activists were cognizant of Marxism's growing popularity on the continent and affected by the internal class struggles in Africa.

Buhle concludes with a relatively optimistic look at the present, exploring Liberation Theology, the strange renaissance of Marxism in the academy, and the latest developments in post-structuralist cultural criticism. In isolation, the current prospects for transformation do not look very promising. But after reading this remarkable history of radical resilience, we can be assured that U.S. Marxism, in one form or another, will nourish itself well beyond the postmodern world. In Buhle's words, "Life continues, radicalism renews itself, heedless of ideologies and expectations. This is the greatest, and the most hopeful, lesson of all" (p. 256).

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DOROTHY PARKER DESERVES BETTER

by Annette Rubinstein

Dorothy Parker: What Fresh Hell Is This? by Marion Meade. New York: Villard Books, 1988. 480 pp. $22.50.

This is, unfortunately, a most disappointing book. Despite the respect evidenced by years of resourceful research, a handsome well-illustrated format, twenty-eight pages of notes, and a thirteen page index, it trivializes both its subject and her times.

Marion Meade's meticulous documentation of every retrievable Parker love affair, enumerating not only with whom but, as far as possible, how often and where she was accompanied to bed, shows investigative ability worthy of a better cause. In fact, the biographer frequently extends her conscientious report to inform us whom Parker's companions subsequently bedded.

There is also, of course, a careful account of the jobs Parker held, the verse and short stories she published, and later the films on which she and her husband, Alan Campbell, worked in Hollywood. Finally, there are painfully exact descriptions of many of her prolonged unhappy drinking bouts and her several suicide attempts.

One cannot say that Meade altogether ignores Dorothy Parker's forty years of courageous radical activism. We do have a somewhat patronizing account of her arrest while leading a Sacco-Vanzetti demonstration twelve days before their execution in 1927, a sympathetic account of her visit to Spain during the Civil War and her subsequent concern for the Spanish orphans, and finally a bare colorless summary of her defiance of the House Un-American

Annette Rubinstein, who is on the boards of the New York Marxist School and *Science & Society*, recently returned from a year of teaching U.S. literature in Beijing.

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Activities Committee. There is even a passing mention of her part in founding the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League, her support of the Scottsboro Boys, and her membership in the League of American Writers. But all this history is covered, or rather mentioned, in fewer than thirty of the biography's 414 pages, often in a sentence or two surrounded by discussion of other matters.

There is no mention at all of the consistent principled part Parker played during the cold-war 1950s. Beleaguered left-wing organizations such as the American Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born or the Marxist-oriented Jefferson School of Social Science knew that she was one of the very few celebrities who would still lend her name to a fund-raising affair or demonstration. In fact, although often unwell and always a reluctant and unhappy (though invariably successful) public speaker, she would put aside her private misery to present a pithy, deceptively light talk, making the occasion a financial and political success.

The one exception to the book's blanket indifference toward Dorothy Parker's lifelong political concern is the biographer's story of Parker's ten days in Madrid and Valencia in 1937, her intense unwavering concern for the Loyalists (who, she was privately convinced, would be defeated), and her subsequent effective support for the Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee. This exception seems largely due to Meade's reasonable desire to refute Lillian Hellman's self-serving tale of her own visit to Spain, which not only ignores Parker's earlier and more significant one, but omits any indication that it was Parker's insistence which persuaded a reluctant Hellman to go.

The book is, naturally, much enlivened by innumerable Parkerisms and quotes from other Algonquin habitués. More important, it gives a fuller picture of her family background and early years than has hitherto been available. This material is interesting and often significant, although it is presented with a good deal of shallow quasi-Freudian "explanation." But despite the careful documentation found in the book's notes, where each incident and quotation is backed up by a published statement, letter, or oral interview, the text seems to recognize no demarcation between fact and hypothesis. Meade uses exactly the same tone to tell us what Parker did or said and to describe what she, or others, supposedly felt and thought.

There are many thumbnail sketches of such well-known figures as Benchley, Martha Gelhorn, Hemingway, S.J. Perelman, and Ross of the *New Yorker;* there is also a friendly full-length portrait of Alan Campbell and an unfriendly one of Lillian Hellman. One can only

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regret that so much hard work and good will have not created a more significant view of Dorothy Parker's life and times.

This failure is all the more regrettable because the opportunity to interview her radical associates is very rapidly disappearing. A brief item in the *New York Times* of October 21, 1988 indicates the wealth of material such interviews would have uncovered. The urn containing her ashes, long overlooked in a law office, was claimed by the NAACP, to which she had left her small estate. At the internment ceremony in a garden at the group's national headquarters, the executive director spoke of "Miss Parker" as "a battler for civil rights" when that was "socially unacceptable."

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CAPITAL UNREVISED

by W.H. Locke Anderson

Understanding Capital, by Duncan K. Foley. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986. 208 pp. $9.50.

Marxists must periodically reaffirm their basic tenets, of course, if only to restate them in contemporary terms. Anyone familiar with Duncan Foley and his work would expect him to do this clearly and forcefully, and they will not be disappointed by his recent book on *Capital*. It is particularly welcome at the present time, when traditional Marxist theory is being challenged by a self-consciously revisionist school, "Analytical Marxism," whose members seem intent on reducing Marxism to a subsidiary branch of bourgeois social science.*

Foley's book follows, approximately, the plan of the three volumes of *Capital*, with references as well to the *Grundrisse* and other sources. There is some mathematics, but it is neither intrusive nor formidable and is used only where the exposition would be blurred if it were avoided. Technical innovations are sometimes introduced to clarify Marx's argument, but not to replace it with something else. The following passage captures well the spirit and style of Foley's exposition, which presents Marx's message in modest, matter-of-fact language:

> If you do not accept the postulate that labor produces the whole value added, you will not see much basis for the claim that wage-labor is exploitative. I think this is the main reason that the labor theory of value has fallen into disrepute among orthodox economists. To avoid the characterization of capitalist social relations as exploitative requires the construction of

W.H. Locke Anderson is a writer who lives in New York City.

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some other theory of value that makes the wage seem to be a complete social equivalent for the labor that workers actually perform. (p. 39)

The book's tacit insistence that Marxism is first and foremost a means for people to understand and transform their lives, and not just another opportunity for academic novelty, is most apparent in the chapter on the transformation problem, an area in which the temptation to be technically extravagant overwhelms other authors. "There seems no reason specific to the transformation problem," Foley says, "for abandoning the labor theory of value as a practical, operational framework for the explanatory analysis of capitalist economic relations" (p. 104). From the viewpoint of someone who shares Marx's agenda, this statement cannot be made too emphatically. "Monsieur le Capital" and "Madame la Terre" are the instruments of human labor, not its partners. Labor values are primary facts of production. In capitalist society, commodities are the *bearers* of labor as well as its products, and the circulation of commodities is an intrinsic link in cooperative production. If labor values were also related to competitive prices in a simple way, that would be mildly interesting, though unimportant. But the well-known and over-analyzed difficulties of the transformation problem are sham difficulties.

Prices that yield a uniform rate of profit are not empirical reality; they are ideological constructs of bourgeois economics and only need to be "explained" by an economic theory whose intent is apologetic. Marx seems not to have appreciated this fully, or if he did, he did not state it in so many words. To my knowledge, Foley is the first Marxist to devalue the transformation problem explicitly in public (and thereby, implicitly, to devalue prices of production), and if he is to be faulted for his treatment of that matter, it is only because while stating that, "Proponents of both neoclassical economics and Marxist economic theory agree that there is a tendency for profit rates in different sectors of the capitalist economic to be equalized by the competition between capitals" (p. 93), he fails to stress the many countertendencies that make competitive prices far, far less interesting than neoclassical

*Any reader not familiar with this apostasy may want to consult John E. Roemer, ed., *Analytical Marxism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) or other recent books by the major insurgents, the most active of whom are Roemer and Jon Elster. The members of the group, who are quite conscious that they comprise a "school," publicly refer to themselves (in Latin, yet) as "the Marxism without bullshit group," inviting the obvious response from their antagonists. A counterattack on Analytical Marxism is under way, needless to say. For examples, see the pertinent articles and book review in *Science and Society* (Summer 1988); further critical articles will appear in subsequent issues of that journal.

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and Marxist economists have usually seemed to think they are. This is not to say that Marxist economic theory should be silent on the question of market prices. But if it must start from premises of bourgeois economics, it would do better to pick the universal monopoly and constant flux of the renegade Schumpeter over the universal competition and harmony of the Smithian mainstream. And in any case, Marxists should quit worrying about how to reproduce bourgeois apologetics from Marxist premises. Foley seems clearly and explicitly to recognize this.

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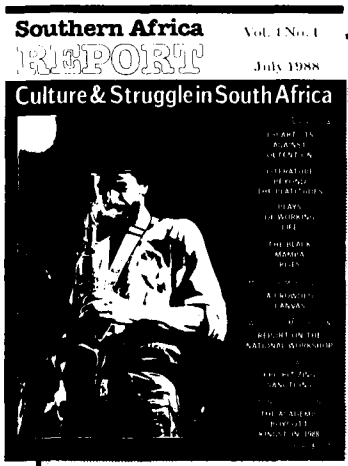

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(Continued from inside front cover)

of such a system of society, we argued, were demonstrated by the experience of the Soviet Union, especially in the war against Nazi Germany. "These facts—and they are facts which no amount of wishful thinking can conjure away—give to the USSR a unique importance in the development of socialism and in the history of our time."

From this we deduced that it would be completely unrealistic and counterproductive to imagine that socialism can be built internationally by fighting it where it already exists. "On the other hand," we wrote, "we do not accept that the USSR is above criticism simply because it is socialist. We believe in, and shall be guided by, the principle that the cause of socialism has everything to gain and nothing to lose from a full and frank discussion of shortcomings as well as accomplishments of socialist countries and socialist parties everywhere."

In closing, we stated our intention to follow the development of socialism all over the world but at the same time emphasized that our major concern would be less with socialism abroad than with socialism at home, being convinced that "the sooner the United States is transformed from a capitalist to a socialist society the better it will be not only for Americans but for all mankind."

Does that introductory editorial in the first issue of MR accurately reflect "where we stand" forty years later? On the whole, yes. We probably wouldn't formulate it exactly the same way today. Two things especially would need to be added. First—and Soviet experience has proved this as well as the possibility and workability of socialism—to grow and develop and realize its potentialities socialism must be democratic in the root sense of the word. Second, the promised emphasis on "socialism at home" has proved to be less feasible and fruitful than we had hoped. Not only is there no socialism in the visible future of U.S. society, there isn't even a coherent socialist movement here. For us, Marx's project, the ruthless critique of capitalism, remains at the top of the agenda. No doubt the seeds of socialism have been planted here, but they are slow to germinate, and no one can yet foresee the date or manner of their sprouting and growth. To study these phenomena it is still necessary to look elsewhere.

Looking back over the intervening years, we can see that these additions to our original statement of intentions have actually imposed themselves on our performance. The critique of capitalism *has* been at the top of our agenda, and the study of socialism *has* been focussed abroad, especially on the Soviet Union, China, and the Third World. And so it will probably continue to be, if not for the next forty years, at least as far ahead as it is now useful to try to look.

Anniversaries are a time for remembering, taking stock, and celebrating. During this milestone year we will be organizing a number of events, including lectures, a roundtable discussion with the editors, an anniversary tour to China, a dance at the Socialist Scholars Conference, and a gala fundraising party. We are also planning to mark the year in the magazine itself, by reprinting outstanding contributions from the first forty volumes, beginning this month with "Why Socialism?" by Albert Einstein, which appeared in Volume 1, Number 1. In addition, we have somewhat changed the magazine's cover to recapture the spirit of MR's original design. As the year progresses, we will keep readers informed of special events and will seek to enlist your support to make possible forty more years of critical analysis and advocacy.

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